



News Release

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Shellfish areas listed as “threatened” with closure due to poor water quality

OLYMPIA — Water pollutants are threatening more than 20 Puget Sound commercial shellfish growing areas with closure.

Each year the Washington State Department of Health reviews water quality and pollution conditions in commercial shellfish growing areas and issues a list of areas that are threatened with closures. The “threatened” designation usually applies to only part of a shellfish area. This year the agency has listed 23 commercial shellfish growing areas that have the potential to be closed, down from 25 areas listed last year.

“Some very productive oyster and clam beds are meeting the water quality standards by the thinnest of margins,” said Bob Woolrich, growing area manager for the agency. “Parts of Oakland Bay near Shelton, Samish Bay in Skagit County, and Willapa Bay in Pacific County are on the verge of closure. We have to close small pieces of Dyes Inlet in Kitsap County and a small piece of Willapa to harvesting now because they don’t meet the standards.”

Local, state and tribal agencies use the list to focus pollution control efforts to avoid closures. In almost every area that has been listed, there has been some effort to identify and correct pollution sources. Many of the threatened sites are located near rivers or streams that bring non-point pollution in from the watershed. Non-point pollution includes waste from farm animals, hobby farms, storm water, onsite sewage systems, and wildlife.

Washington is the nation’s leading producer of farmed oysters, clams and mussels. In the past two years, pollution control efforts have reopened shellfish beds in four areas: Lynch Cove in

Mason County, Drayton Harbor and Portage Bay in Whatcom County, and Burley Lagoon in Pierce and Kitsap counties.

The threatened shellfish areas for 2006, listed by county, are:

- Grays Harbor County – Grays Harbor near Elk River
- Jefferson County – The southernmost parts of Discovery Bay
- Kitsap County – Dyes Inlet and Cedar Cove in Port Gamble Bay
- Mason County – Annas Bay, North Bay, Oakland Bay, and McLane Cove in Pickering Passage
- Pacific County – Bay Center, south end of Long Island, the Naselle River, and part of the Nemah River
- Pierce County – Burley Lagoon, Filucy Bay, and Rocky Bay
- San Juan County – Mackaye Harbor
- Skagit County – Samish Bay
- Snohomish County – South Skagit Bay
- Thurston County – Henderson Inlet and the southernmost end of Eld Inlet
- Whatcom County – Birch Bay, Drayton Harbor, and Portage Bay

Restoration of closed and threatened shellfish growing areas is a priority objective of the 2005-2007 Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan.

More information on the overall state strategy to protect shellfish areas in Puget Sound is available on the [Puget Sound Action Team's Web site](http://www.psat.wa.gov/) (<http://www.psat.wa.gov/>). A map of the threatened shellfish areas is posted on the [Department of Health's Web site](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/Threatareas05.pdf) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/Threatareas05.pdf).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a healthy dose of information.